REMARKS

Claims 50-69 remain in this application. Claims 1-49 were previously canceled, without prejudice. Claim 50 has been amended.

Before addressing the merits of the grounds for rejection, Applicants provide the following brief description of the invention. The present invention provides a system and method for exchanging information that promotes the organization and accretion of knowledge relating to a given topic (e.g., baseball cards, cooking recipes, etc.). A problem with existing information exchange groups is that the groups are frequently deluged with member-contributed information not relevant to the topic of the exchange group. The present invention overcomes this problem by allowing members to rate the relevance of information (posts, links, web sites, files, other remote resources, etc.) contributed by other members with respect to the topic. Based on the ratings received from the members, relevance values or points are assigned to the member-contributed information and provided to the group. By taking note of the relevance values or points assigned to the information, the members are able to avoid wasting their time reviewing irrelevant posts, links, etc.

The Examiner rejected Claims 50-69 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Herz (US 6,460,036) in view of Rose et al. (US 5,724,567). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

With respect to Claim 50, the Examiner asserts that Herz discloses a method for exchanging information within a group of users on a wide area network, comprising the steps of:

- serving a topically organized information resource over a wide area network (Figure 1; and column 28, line 59 – column 29, line 31), the information resource comprising a defined topic of information (i.e., a cluster) (column 5, lines 32-38), posts of information from users, and a plurality of links to respective different remote information resources each containing information related to the topic

(column 12, lines 31-36; and column 74, lines 12-38); and

- receiving user ratings from the users (column 3, lines 19-23), the user ratings signifying relevance of respective ones of the posts and of the remote information resources to the defined topic (column 19, lines 30-43), the user ratings determined by respective ones of the users after reviewing ones of the posts and of the remote information resources (column 18, line 65 – column 19, line 69; and column 58, lines 43-54).

The Examiner further asserts that Rose et al. disclose the steps of:

- aggregating the user ratings to provide aggregate ratings data (i.e., combine) (column 8, lines 45-56); and
- providing access to the aggregate ratings data in association with the posts of information and with the plurality of links (Figure 3; and column 4, lines 45-62).

The Examiner states it would have been obvious to a person skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teachings of Herz and Rose et al. because the teaching in Rose et al. of aggregating the rating data would allow the users to immediately access the information sources most relevant to their needs and interests.

In order to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness for a claim, the prior art references must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. M.P.E.P. § 2143, at 2100-125 (Sept. 2004). Thus, to sustain the foregoing rejection of Claim 50, Herz, alone or in combination with Rose et al., must identically teach or suggest every element of Claim 50, arranged as in Claim 50. The Applicants respectfully submit that Herz and Rose et al., individually or in combination, fail to teach or suggest every element of Claim 50.

Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, column 19, lines 30-43, as well as Herz in general, do not disclose the step of receiving user ratings regarding the relevance of respective ones of the posts and of the remote information resources to the defined topic. Herz discusses relevance-feedback ratings in the context of refining a system's knowledge of an individual's interests. Column 19, lines 30-43; column 17, lines 29-43. In Herz, the focus is on figuring out which topics are of interest to the user rather than

determining how relevant the user's contribution to an information exchange group is with respect to the group's defined topic, as recited in Claim 50. Column 18, lines 28-34. For example, Herz discloses a system that functions as a news clipping service that presents an individual user with news articles based on the user's numerous interests (e.g., golf, cooking, baseball cards, etc.). Column 18, lines 36-38. In another example, Herz discloses an active feedback method wherein the user indicates his or her interest in an article of information on a scale of -2 (active distaste) through 0 (no special interest) to 10 (great interest). Column 17, lines 39-42. Again, the focus of this example and the other examples in Herz is figuring out the user's interests, so as to be able to provide information to the user that relates to the user's interests. Neither Herz nor Rose et al. disclose a method that comprises the step of receiving ratings from other group members regarding how relevant the user's contributed information is to the group's topic (e.g., baseball cards).

To further illustrate the differences between the invention in Claim 50 and the cited prior art references, the following example is provided. Suppose the defined topic of the information exchange group is baseball cards. A first group member posts a link to a website that relates primarily to comic books with little to no information regarding baseball cards. A second member and a third member of the information exchange group who review the first member's posting and link to this website will realize that the information provided at the website is not particularly relevant to the topic of baseball cards. The second and third members give the first member's posted link a low rating. As a result, future group members who seek information regarding baseball cards will be able to avoid wasting their time visiting the website linked to from the first user's posting. The steps recited in Claim 50 make is possible for users to rate the relevance of information posted by other users, thereby making is possible for other group members to focus their attention on the information having higher topical relevance ratings, as provided by other group members.

In contrast, Herz does not disclose the concept of peer review of informational

posts by group members. The focus of Herz is providing information to the user based on the user's list of interests and feedback. The user's feedback boils down to whether or not he/she liked the article of information or whether he/she found the article interesting, which is fundamentally different from having members of an information exchange group rate the topical relevance of posts or articles for the benefit of other group members.

Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, column 8, lines 45-56, as well as Rose et al. in general, do not disclose the step of aggregating the user ratings to provide aggregate relevance ratings data, as recited in Claim 50. Instead, Rose el al. teach assigning a rank or score to a user's message (e.g., a call for submitting papers to a conference) based on how old the message is. Column 8, lines 45-56. More recently posted messages receive a higher score, while older messages receive lower scores. *Id.* The rating of messages based on how old the messages are is fundamentally different from having other users of the information access system rate the relevance of messages with respect to the defined topic of the system.
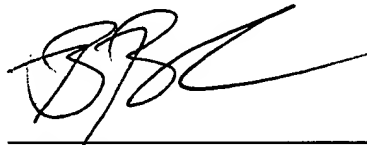
Applicants submit that Claims 51-69, which depend from Claim 50, are patentable for the reasons stated above with respect to Claim 50, and because of the additional limitations set forth therein. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claims 50-69 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 50-69 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested, and a timely Notice of Allowability is solicited. If it would be helpful to placing this application in condition for allowance, the Applicants encourage the Examiner to contact the undersigned counsel and conduct a telephonic interview.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition the Commissioner for a two-month extension of time, extending to June 6, 2005 (the first business day following June 4, 2005), the period for response to the Office Action dated January 4, 2005. The Commissioner is authorized to charge $225.00 for the two-month extension of time pursuant to 37 CFR §1.17(a)(2), and any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-0639.

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